

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 173220

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS-1 AND 2

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, LE, SY, SA

SUBJECT: LEBANON: THE SAUDI ROLE

REF: STATE 172481; STATE 171142

1. WE APPRECIATE THE EFFORTS YOU HAVE MADE TO ENGAGE THE SAUDIS IN A DIALOGUE ABOUT LEBANON EVENTS, BUT WE WOULD NOW LIKE YOU TO PRESS THEM TO EXPLAIN MORE SPECIFICALLY WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN DOING AND TO URGE THEM TO NEW EFFORTS.

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A) THE BLOW TO LEGITIMACY AND TO THE CONCEPT OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY CAUSED BY THE POSSIBLE RESIGNATION OF SARKIS, NOT TO MENTION THE DANGER OF WIDER CONFLICT IN THE REGION IF THE SITUATION ESCALATES, SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO ENCOURAGE THEM ALONG THIS PATH.

B) THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT IS INFLUENTIAL AND WELL-CONNECTED, AND HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE PAST EVEN WHILE BEING THWARTED BY THE SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS ON OCCASION.

C) THE SAUDIS HAVE INFLUENCE WITH THE SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS. FYI AND STRICTLY PROTECT: THE SAUDIS APPARENTLY MADE A \$25 MILLION PAYMENT TO SYRIA LAST WEEK AFTER A LONG HIATUS. END FYI.

2. WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DRAW ON REFTELS TO ASK THE SAUDIS TO TAKE ACTIONS SIMILAR TO OUR OWN, PARTICULARLY IN URGING SARKIS NOT TO RESIGN AND IN ASKING THE SYRIANS TO WORK FOR AND COOPERATE IN A NEGOTIATED RESOLUTION OF THE SECURITY PROBLEM IN BEIRUT, RATHER THAN RESORTING TO FORCE. PLEASE CONTINUE TO REMIND THE SAUDIS THAT THEY WERE THE ARCHITECT OF THE RIYADH MINI SUMMIT WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT AN END TO THE CIVIL CONFLICT IN LEBANON AS WELL AS A SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN RECONCILIATION. THE SAME DANGERS TO REGIONAL STABILITY AND TO THE ROLE OF MODERATE ARAB GOVERNMENTS EXIST IN TODAY'S SITUATION. WE HOPE SAUDI ARABIA WILL TAKE A SIMILAR INITIATIVE TO DEFUSE THE PRESENT SITUATION.

3. SAY TO THE SAUDIS, IN ADDITION TO MAKING THE OTHER POINTS IN REFTELS, THAT AN ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF THE SECURITY PROBLEM IN BEIRUT MAY REQUIRE SOME REDUCTION OF PALESTINIAN ARMS STRENGTH IN THE ARMED CAMPS IN BEIRUT.

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THE SYRIANS APPARENTLY WANT TO REMOVE THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS FROM BEIRUT, BUT THE CHRISTIANS WILL NOT DO SO AS LONG AS THEY ARE MENACED BY THE PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS FROM OTHER QUARTERS OF THE CITY. THEY WILL RESIST THE SYRIANS AND ANY NEGOTIATED RESOLUTION WOULD PROBABLY REQUIRE A QUID PRO QUO. IN CONSULTATION WITH LEBANESE LEADERS WHO ARE NOW TRYING TO WORK OUT A DISENGAGEMENT FORMULA, WE HOPE THE SAUDIS WILL BEND THEIR MINDS TO WAYS TO BRING ABOUT SOME PALESTINIAN DISARMAMENT IN BEIRUT IN RETURN FOR THE DISPLACEMENT OR AT LEAST THE REDUCTION IN VISIBILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, WHILE SECURITY IN CHRISTIAN BEIRUT IS MAINTAINED PRINCIPALLY BY REGULAR LEBANON POLICE AND ARMY UNITS.

4) TO SUM UP, WE HOPE THE SAUDIS WILL INFORM US OF WHAT THEY ARE DOING, AND WHAT THEY AND WE MIGHT DO TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THIS SERIOUS PROBLEM. WE WISH TO CONVEY THE SENSE AND THE REALITY THAT WE HAVE THE SAME OBJECTIVES AND WANT TO WORK ON THIS PROBLEM TOGETHER. VANCE

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